

SHANNON MINTER

b. February 14, 1961

TRANSGENDER SUPREME COURT ATTORNEY

“This is how we win; not by being confrontational but by showing people we want to contribute to the community”

He is a groundbreaking transgender civil rights attorney who argued successfully before the U.S. Supreme Court.

Shannon Minter is a groundbreaking transgender civil rights attorney who argued successfully before the U.S. Supreme Court. He serves as the legal director of the National Center for Lesbian Rights (NCLR).

Minter was born on Valentine's Day in East Texas and assigned female at birth. In high school, Minter believed he was a lesbian. He came out to his family, who vehemently disapproved of his presumed sexuality. Minter experienced “a lot of rejection” in his conservative hometown and often feared for his safety growing up.

Minter attended the University of Texas at Austin and graduated with honors before attending Cornell Law School. He earned a J.D. in 1993, graduating Magna

Cum Laude, Order of the Coif, and joined the NCLR the same year. Headquartered in San Francisco, the NCLR is a leading organization dedicated to LGBTQ+ rights. Minter founded the NCLR Youth Project, the first legal advocacy program of its kind.

In 1996, at age 35, Minter began his transition, keeping his given name. Minter believed it might be easier, particularly for his family, if he came out as a transgender man. Instead, the revelation shattered Minter's connections to his family and church. Those relationships took “decades to heal.”

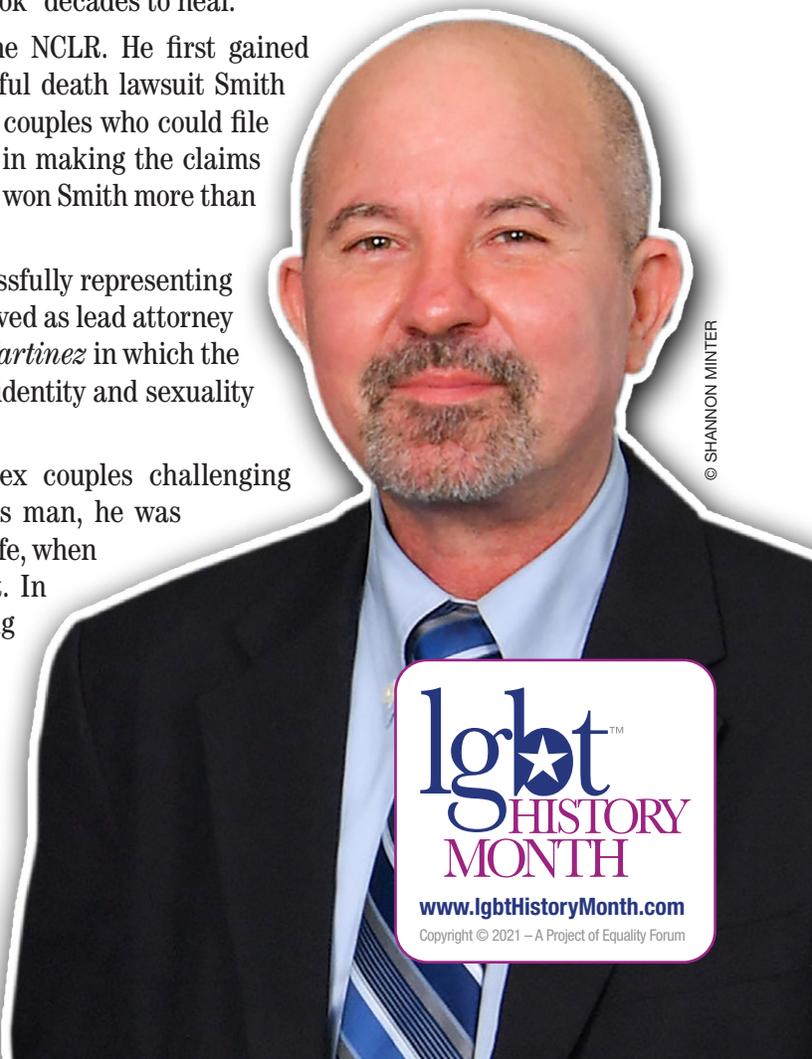
Minter went on to secure myriad historic victories for the NCLR. He first gained attention in 2001 representing Sharon Smith in the wrongful death lawsuit Smith filed on behalf of her lesbian partner. At the time, the only couples who could file tort claims were married heterosexuals. Minter succeeded in making the claims applicable to same-sex couples in domestic partnerships and won Smith more than \$1.5 million in damages.

Minter captured the national spotlight again in 2003, successfully representing a transgender father seeking custody of his child. Minter served as lead attorney in the U.S. Supreme Court case *Christian Legal Society v. Martinez* in which the court upheld an antidiscrimination policy based on gender identity and sexuality at the University of California, Hastings Law School.

In 2009 Minter served as lead counsel for the same-sex couples challenging Proposition 8 in the California Supreme Court. As a trans man, he was “pained by the injustice” of being able to legally marry his wife, when gay and lesbian couples were not afforded the same right. In a landmark decision, the court struck down Prop 8, making marriage equality state law.

Among numerous other accolades and bar association honors, Minter has received the Cornell Law School Exemplary Public Service Award and the Ford Foundation's Leadership for a Changing World Award.

Minter lives with his wife and daughter in Washington, D.C.



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